

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell and Eliza Symonds Bell, April 2, 1879

Letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to his Parents. 1509 Rhode Island Avenue, Washington, D. C., April 2, 1879. My dear Papa and Mama:

I am very sorry to be so silent — but I can't help it. I am immersed in writing of the most important character law-suits, etc., etc.

Elisha Gray is to be examined tomorrow and I leave tonight for New York to be present. Thus you see the crisis has come. Don't let your cases begin till we have finished here.

I have found upon requesting to use apparatus at the Smithsonian Institute that all the Scientific apparatus is a frightfully neglected condition.

All Prof. Henry's beautiful Electrical and Acoustical apparatus are lying idle and there is no person in the Institute who even knows how to use it. Prof. Baird, (Prof. Henry's successor as Secretary to the Institute) — is a Naturalist and knows little or nothing of Physics — and Prof. Henry's position is still vacant.

The Smithsonian Institute is now looking about for his successor.

That is just the sort of position I aspire to. It would give me an opportunity of devoting myself to scientific research — and I am working towards that end. I am hard at work upon a paper on “Vowel Theories considered in relation to the Phonograph and 2 Phonautograph” which is to be read before the National Academy of Arts and Sciences here on the 15th inst. One special object I have is to show the scientific men here that I have a special familiarity with the subjects that were Prof. Henry's chief objects of study —

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and that my studies could be forwarded by the use of the very apparatus that now lies idle at the Smithsonian.

It is so nice to have Mary here — I only wish I could be at home more — but I trust the law-suits will soon be finished and I be at peace.

With ever so much love to you both and to Louisa and Lizzie and to Carrie, Mrs. Ottaway and all others.

I enclose a photograph of baby for Carrie.

Your loving son, Alec. Prof. A. M. Bell, Brantford, Ont. P. S. Oh! I forgot the very object of this letter! Please send me per return a complete list of all published works or writings — by you or Grandpa for use in an article that appears in a fortnight in which some mention will be made of you and Grandpapa's lives. It will be in "The Telephonic Journal" a new scientific paper to be issued by our Company. Why does not Mr. Williams send you specimen of new battery transmitter. I will send new patent taken out by me.